Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 10 October 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 23rd October 2016: Sanjeevaiah Park. Meeting point: Main gate, 6.00AM.

Spread out over 90 acres, this park, abutting the Hussain Sagar Lake in the heart of the city, is a great spot for birding. Being the start of the migration season, we can expect to see several of the migrant species, in addition to the usual resident species. The shady trees offer refuge to quite a few birds, and the Park has, in the past, yielded sightings of Orioles, Sunbirds, Drongos, Asian Pied Starlings, etc. Leafbirds have been seen occasionally, as also Coppersmith Barbets. The lakeshore should offer some waders and it may be possible to glimpse some Terns and Gulls. This will be a half-day trip. Carry snacks and water as usual. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: TALES FROM THE NEST: Story-telling by Deepa Kiran
Wednesday, 25th October 2016, 6.15PM: Hamburg Hall, Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

If you love stories or birds, this promises to be an enchanting evening of stories about birds and birds watching, as storyteller Deepa Kiran takes us through an engaging story time of delight and discoveries. Deepa Kiran is a storyteller, educationalist, writer and founder of Story Arts India. She has been telling stories for very many years now, starting in a small town in Maharashtra to now regaling audience across the world. She weaves in music, dance, fun, love and laughter into her story time. She trains teachers from the central government, state and private institutions on the art of storytelling and how to use it in a learning environment.

Ameenpur birding trip

Text and illustrations: I K Sanjeevani (age 7)

Hello, I am Sanjeevani. I enjoyed the trip by seeing some birds called White-throated Kingfisher, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Ashy Prinia, Tailorbird, Flowerpecker, Coot, Painted Stork etc. Thank you for teaching me what is Swallow and Swift. I wanted to see Pied Kingfisher but I couldn't. I enjoyed the trip very much and I liked Pheasant-tailed Jacana very much. Chitra aunty told it is a lotus walker. I heard the sound of Red-wattled Lapwing, it sounds like 'Did you do it?' I am really waiting for the next trip. Thank you.

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Trip Report – Tadoba WLS

Text and Photos: Srikanth Bhamidipati

Bengal Tiger

My love for the wild was triggered when, as a kid, I saw my first tiger, walking majestically and then vanishing into the woods. Many years passed with frequent visits to different forests in the country with the sole purpose of spotting this majestic mammal and in the bargain learning about other beings. In recent times, this craze for people wanting to spot a big cat in the wild has increased so much that they don't respect the basic fact – "live and let live - IN PEACE".

We (Lawrence, Amritha, Hemant, Nupur, Ravi, Jayati and I) had planned a visit to Tadoba Andheri Tiger Reserve (TATR) in June 2016. TATR, once a national park converted into a tiger reserve, gave a massive boost to the tourism in that region. The terrain varies from old teak trees to open Savannah-like grasslands and gives scope for many other species as well. The weather during our travel was a little unpredictable. We had planned for a 4-day trip and initial logistics arrangements were underway. The sightings during that time period looked very promising and we hoped for some lovely sights of birds and mammals.

Upon reaching Chandrapur railway station, we hopped onto our pre-booked taxi to the resort where we had booked our accommodation. Excitement levels were high considering the activities we were undertaking in the next few days. On our way towards TATR we crossed small villages and also a huge quarry a few kilometers away from the forest entrance. This put me off as I thought that might affect the sanctity and peace of the forest, but considering the distance to the forest entrance, I was relieved.

Asian Paradise-flycatcher

On our way towards the forest we spotted quite a few birds which are commonly found everywhere, including an Asian Paradise-flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*).

Upon reaching the forest entry gate, our driver had to make an entry and during this time we got our gear ready, hoping for some sightings along the way. Driving through the forest area listening to the calls of the Banded Bay Cuckoo was an amazing feeling. On reaching the resort we checked into our tents and immediately got into action as we planned for a busy day ahead. After getting ready and having a good breakfast, we decided to go for a walk into the surrounding areas of the resort.

While walking into the area we first encountered the Asian Paradise-flycatcher which was flying in the bushes, trying to dodge the shutter bugs. We also saw the Tawny-bellied Babbler (*Dumetia hyperythra*), Common Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) and a few Minivets.

Tawny-bellied Babbler

We walked into the clearance area of the buffer zone and while we all were busily trying to locate a species, our master photographer Hemant captured the image of a bird which was hiding in the bushes – Indian Thick-knee (*Burhinus indicus*). After the small stroll, we headed back to the resort for lunch and then geared up for our first drive into the core area.

The drive into the core area was in a modified Gypsy and we were happy with the open vehicle, for we were sure we wouldn't miss anything. As we were entered the core area there was a sea of vehicles in front of us and they were excited at seeing the Panderpauni tigress. We were amongst the last few to enter the forest. Our aim was spotting birds and this was clearly explained to our guide and the driver.

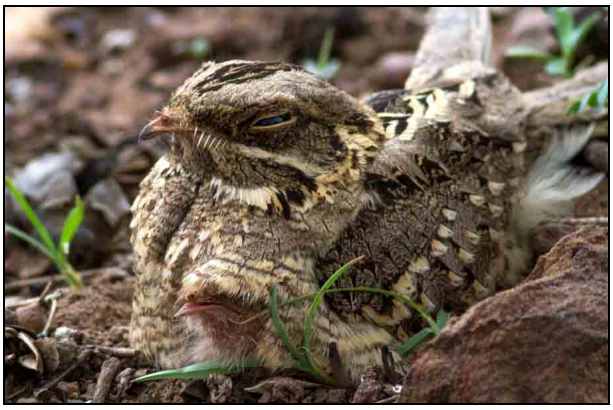
Indian Pitta

From the main road we drove onto a smaller road where calls of the Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*) and Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) caught our attention. The sightings were a bit difficult and we saw some Flowerpeckers and Sunbirds flying on top of the tall tree line. Just as the open forest welcomed us, we had our first important sighting of the day - Sirkeer Malkoha (*Taccocua leschenaultii*). Our guide was hell-bent on tracking a tiger for us, but with no luck that day.

The Indian Pitta, which is a rather shy bird and not seen often even during its season, was the highlight of the trip for us – we saw nothing less than 17 during this trip! As we finished our day, we returned to our resort with some good sightings – about 89 species of birds, Sambar, a few Langur, Gaur and Spotted Deer. One interesting observation was the large proportion of Greater Racket-tailed Drongos (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) with single elongated tail-streamers – nearly 6-7 out of the 10-odd birds that we saw.

Oriental Honey-buzzard

Next morning we went early to the core area and hoped for some good sightings, but there were the same species we had seen on the first day. During our drive, one thing which grabbed my attention were the camera traps set to observe the animals. It was disappointing that technology was being used only to track the movement of these wonderful beings and not for the love and protection of animals. I will explain this a little later. We continued our journey and added about 30 more birds which included an Indian Nightjar (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*) sitting astride its baby. We then headed back to our resort where a nice lunch awaited us.



Indian Nightjar

We had booked for another visit to the forest and this time we visited the buffer zone of the forest. We spotted the Woolly-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*), a few Quails, Owls, Bitterns and other ducks. In the meantime our driver got to know of a tigress sitting in the bushes nearby. When we reached that place there were about 6 more jeeps eagerly waiting for it to come out into the open. After a long wait the Tigress, Madhuri, stood up and glanced at the hungry souls trying to capture the moment in their cameras. She then went back to resting with her 2 cubs that were pretty hard to spot. We also spotted a frightened hare that was trying to save itself from being run over by the vehicles.

As all this was happening, I realized that family never forgets you!! There was a family of Gaur who were looking in the direction of the tigress. The previous evening a calf had been attacked by the tigress and she had hidden it in the bush. The way the Gaurs were looking at that spot was heartbreaking and this is when I understood the circle of life.

Brahminy Starling

Next morning we had the chance to visit the buffer zone again. The sightings weren't too many – it was quite a quiet morning – but the forest was amazing with fresh air coming in from all directions. While driving around aimlessly, we spotted a few raptors, a Black Bittern (*Dupetor flavicollis*) and 2 Mottled Wood Owls (*Strix ocellata*) which were being harassed by a Brahminy Starling (*Sturnia pagodarum*). We returned to our guest house with not much of luck in the morning session.

Lesser Adjutant

In the evening we drove into the forest hoping for some good sightings. We drove to a water hole, our eyes fixed on one particular bird that turned out to be the most important sighting of the trip – the Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*). Just as we headed to another location, our driver got information of a tiger sitting in a water hole in the open. The soul of Michael Schumacher seemed to have possessed him, as he drove very fast to get to that location.

The crowd of vehicles

The male tiger, Pandu, was having a good time resting by the water hole and he was least bothered about the people around. Scores of people had gathered there. We decided to leave the location and move forward as most of the people seemed to have no regard for nature, and it's saddening that a responsible department is not doing anything about it as its primary motto seems to be to increase tourism.

With these thoughts, we returned to the guest house hoping that the next day would be better. On the way, we spotted the highly trained and organized hunters – the wild dogs or Dhole. There were about 5 of them and seemed to be in search of food.

Dhole

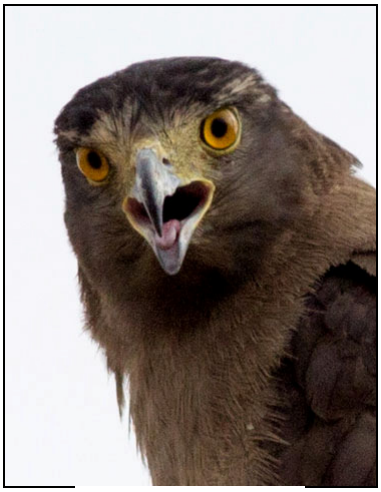
Next morning we again headed back into the core area. *En route*, we saw Spotted Owlets and a Mottled Wood Owl right above our heads in the open. There wasn't enough sunlight to capture a good image but the mere sighting was sufficient. As soon as we entered, the Indian Pitta, Asian Paradise-flycatcher and a female Indian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus kundoo*) gave us a warm welcome and some good poses.

A few meters away there was a Crested Hawk Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*) which was sitting on the road and taking a dip. It gave us a good 20 minutes of time during which we all clicked some 300-400 images each. Then we proceeded into the forest to a water hole and found Barking Deer and some Munias.

Crested Hawk Eagle

Barking Deer

As we were headed back towards the gate, we spotted a Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) sitting at eye level, and to our surprise a Paradise-flycatcher was attacking it! We later realized that there was a nest with its chick and parents always are protective.



Crested Serpent Eagle

That was practically the last sighting of the trip, and we had gathered some awesome memories to carry back.

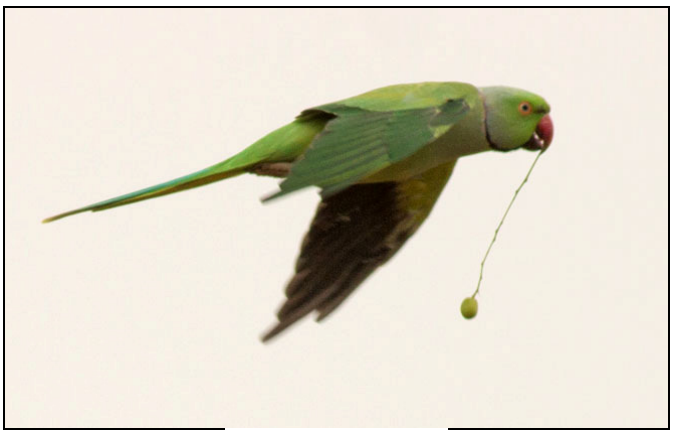
Some more photos taken during the trip:

Asian Pied Starling

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia

Indian Roller

Jungle Owlet



Rose-ringed Parakeet

Small Minivet (female)

White-eyed Buzzard

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker

Brown Fish Owl

Common Woodshrike

Grey-breasted Prinia

Oriental Magpie Robin

Listed below are the birds spotted during our trip:

Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name
1	Intermediate Egret	9	Asian Openbill	17	Cotton Pygmy-goose
2	Grey Heron	10	Woolly-necked Stork	18	Spot-billed Duck
3	Purple Heron	11	Lesser Adjutant	19	Oriental Honey-buzzard
4	Eastern Cattle Egret	12	Glossy Ibis	20	Black-winged Kite
5	Indian Pond Heron	13	Black-headed Ibis	21	Short-toed Snake Eagle
6	Chestnut Bittern	14	Red-naped Ibis	22	Crested Serpent Eagle
7	Black Bittern	15	Lesser Whistling-duck	23	Shikra
8	Painted Stork	16	Comb Duck	24	White-eyed Buzzard

Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name
25	Crested Hawk Eagle	63	Jungle Owlet	101	Bay-backed Shrike
26	Painted Francolin	64	Spotted Owlet	102	Long-tailed Shrike
27	Grey Francolin	65	Indian Nightjar	103	Orange-headed Thrush
28	Jungle Bush Quail	66	Savanna Nightjar	104	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
29	Painted Spurfowl	67	Asian Palm Swift	105	Indian Robin
30	Grey Junglefowl	68	Crested Treeswift	106	Oriental Magpie Robin
31	Indian Peafowl	69	Common Kingfisher	107	Pied Bushchat
32	White-breasted Waterhen	70	White-breasted Kingfisher	108	Tawny-bellied Babbler
33	Purple Swamphen	71	Pied Kingfisher	109	Large Grey Babbler
34	Common Moorhen	72	Green Bee-eater	110	Yellow-billed Babbler
35	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	73	Indian Roller	111	Zitting Cisticola
36	Bronze-winged Jacana	74	Common Hoopoe	112	Grey-breasted Prinia
37	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	75	Indian Grey Hornbill	113	Ashy Prinia
38	Red-wattled Lapwing	76	Brown-headed Barbet	114	Plain Prinia
39	Black-winged Stilt	77	Coppersmith Barbet	115	Common Tailorbird
40	Indian Thick-knee	78	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	116	Great Tit
41	Oriental Pratincole	79	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	117	Purple-rumped Sunbird
42	River Tern	80	Black-rumped Flameback	118	Purple Sunbird
43	Painted Sandgrouse	81	Greater Flameback	119	Oriental White-eye
44	Blue Rock Pigeon	82	Indian Pitta	120	Indian Silverbill
45	Laughing Dove	83	Singing Bushlark	121	White-rumped Munia
46	Spotted Dove	84	Indian Bushlark	122	Scaly-breasted Munia
47	Eurasian Collared Dove	85	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	123	House Sparrow
48	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	86	Rufous-tailed Lark	124	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia
49	Green Imperial Pigeon	87	Sykes's Lark	125	Baya Weaver
50	Alexandrine Parakeet	88	Dusky Crag Martin	126	Brahminy Starling
51	Rose-ringed Parakeet	89	Barn Swallow	127	Chestnut-tailed Starling
52	Plum-headed Parakeet	90	Wire-tailed Swallow	128	Asian Pied Starling
53	Southern Coucal	91	Red-rumped Swallow	129	Common Myna
54	Sirkeer Malkoha	92	Streak-throated Swallow	130	Jungle Myna
55	Jacobin Cuckoo	93	Large Cuckooshrike	131	Indian Golden Oriole
56	Asian Koel	94	Small Minivet	132	Black-hooded Oriole
57	Banded Bay Cuckoo	95	Common Woodshrike	133	Black Drongo
58	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	96	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	134	White-bellied Drongo
59	Common Hawk Cuckoo	97	Black-naped Monarch	135	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo
60	Indian Cuckoo	98	White-spotted Fantail	136	Rufous Treepie
61	Brown Fish Owl	99	Red-vented Bulbul	137	House Crow
62	Mottled Wood Owl	100	Common Iora	138	Indian Jungle Crow

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Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Himalayan Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*)

Himalayan Bulbul (Chopta, 09-10-2016)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Pycnonotidae
Genus: *Pycnonotus*
Species: *P. leucogenys*
Size: 18-20 cm

Description & distribution: The Himalayan Bulbul, a very attractive-looking member of the Pycnonotidae family, is a resident breeder across its range from Iraq and southern Iran east across the Arabian Peninsula to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, north-western India, Nepal and Bhutan. It has the distinction of being the national bird of Bahrain. Clear white cheeks, with a black crescent at the rear, and a prominent forward-pointing crest differentiate it from the somewhat similar-looking White-eared Bulbul; the crest may not be as prominent in the birds found on the plains within its range. The head, face and throat are black, and the long brownish-grey tail has a terminal whitish patch. The upperparts are also brownish-grey, and underparts are pale grey-buff to grey-white, with a rich yellow vent. The irises are reddish-brown, with a narrow yellow eye ring, and the bill and legs are black. Sexes are similar; juvenile birds show a duller brown head.

Habitat & behaviour: The Himalayan Bulbul is usually seen in pairs or small flocks, in dry alpine forests and shrub, wooded valleys and bushy hillsides, as well as sub-Himalayan plains, including bushes around towns and villages. A bird of open country, it prefers bushes rather than trees. It is generally seen up to an elevation of around 2400 metres, although it may venture higher if fruiting trees are present. It also frequents cities, parks and gardens near human habitat, especially where food scraps are left, since that attracts the flies and other insects that form part of its diet. It tends to hunt from a perch, hawking insects in the air or on the ground. Besides, it also feeds on fruits, berries, seeds, buds and nectar.

Nesting: The Himalayan Bulbul nests in low bushes or branches of low trees, generally between 0.5-3m above the ground. The nest is a cup made of grass, twigs, stems, leaves and roots, and lined with finer rootlets, lichen and grass. The nest is built by the female. The usual clutch consists of 2 to 5 eggs, incubated mainly by the female, but the young are fed by both parents.

Local name: The Himalayan Bulbul is known as *'safed kaan bulbul'* in Hindi, *'shwet-karna bulbul'* in Sanskrit, and *'pahari bulbul'* in Punjabi and Bengali.

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For Private Circulation Only
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